



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 105th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 144

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1998

No. 10

Senate

S676

NATO ENLARGEMENT

Mr. BIDEN. Madam President, I am pleased to report a very historic event that occurred today at the State Department at about 12 noon. The President of the United States, the Secretary of State, the Vice President, and the Foreign Ministers of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary, were in attendance. At this event, the President signed an amendment to the Washington treaty--the NATO treaty--that has been or will shortly be delivered to the Senate asking that the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland become full members of NATO. This ceremony at the State Department completed the formal transmission from the President to this body for its advice and consent of the protocols of accession of those three countries into NATO.

It was pointed out to me by the Vice President, as we were leaving the State Department ceremony, that it was this very day upon which the Yalta Conference ended some 50 years ago. It seems to me incredible that it is happening, but also that it has taken this long for to us rectify a serious historical error. At the ceremony, there were a number of things stated about why this was so important.

We are moving very quickly this session to a momentous vote addressing America's security interests in Europe, which will not only affect us, but the next several generations of Americans. I refer to the addition of new allies to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Recognizing that the protocols would be referred to the Foreign Relations Committee for its review, the committee, under Chairman Helms' leadership, has been holding a series of comprehensive hearings since October on the pros and cons of enlarging NATO.

Beginning with Secretary of State Albright, we heard testimony from senior Clinton administration and former executive branch officers, retired ambassadors and generals, and distinguished academics and foreign policy experts--most in favor of, but some in opposition to expansion.

The Committee also invited public testimony from all citizens concerned with this issue, welcoming veterans groups, scholars, and representatives of the American Baltic, Central and East European, and Jewish communities. Opinion among all witnesses ran four to one in favor of embracing the Poles, Hungarians, and Czechs as NATO allies.

With the Protocols now in hand, the Committee will hold one more hearing with Secretary of State Albright, Secretary of Defense Cohen, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Shelton on February 24.

The following week, the Committee is expected to markup and vote on the Resolution of Ratification. I anticipate that the Committee will overwhelmingly recommend consideration of the Resolution by the full Senate. The Majority Leader has indicated that consideration should begin in March, after action on campaign finance reform.

Mr. President, rather than giving a detailed statement now on the many benefits to America of NATO enlargement, I wish only to enunciate a few central themes upon which I will expand as Senate consideration of these vital protocols approaches.

The first thesis is that, as NATO's leader, America must ensure the Alliance moves beyond its Cold War

mission. The status quo is tantamount to declaring NATO a non-performing asset.

Internally, NATO is already adapting to address different threats to peace, now that a massive military strike from the East is highly unlikely. The Alliance is placing smaller, smarter, more mobile forces under a streamlined command system with a new strategic concept. This will allow rapid action, including beyond the borders of NATO, such as our current mission in Bosnia.

Enlargement is part of NATO's external transformation. This transformation is designed to widen the zone of stability, deter new threats of ethnic conflict, eliminate new divisions or 'zones of influence,' and promote common action against weapons proliferation and transfer, terrorism, and organized crime. NATO's open door to expansion helps provide the confidence and inspiration for continued democratization and economic development in the former Soviet States and in Eastern and Central Europe.

Admission of new allies is the most solemn in the spectrum of new security relationships NATO has undertaken throughout Europe and the former Soviet Union, since the admission of Spain, and prior to that, Germany, Greece and Turkey. In addition, NATO has developed unique partnerships with Russia and Ukraine, and has drawn former adversaries into a web of cooperation through what we refer to as the Partnership for Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.

The second thesis that I will be expounding on at a later time is that the costs of enlargement are real but manageable, and represent a bargain for the American people in terms of our security.

NATO's own study of the Polish, Hungarian, and Czech contributions to our common defense rates them well worth the ten-year, one-and-a-half billion dollar price tag. The U.S. share in this price will be roughly four hundred million dollars over ten years, or about forty million dollars per year.

Most importantly, Secretary of State Albright noted in her testimony, that our Allies stated at the last NATO summit that the resources for enlargement will be found and that she will ensure that our allies pay their fair share--a very important requirement to be met in order to gain the support of our colleagues in the Senate.

In the long-run, America has always found that common defense is cheaper defense. This is true certainly in financial, but even more so in the far more precious human resources the sixty million people and two hundred thousand troops Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic bring to our common security. This is not a question of whether the U.S. will trade Warsaw for Washington, or Budapest for Buffalo, but rather that the Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians are willing to assume the front line in America's forward defense of its shores.

The third thesis is that our relations with Russia remain solid, productive, and cooperative, notwithstanding enlargement. Prophets of backlash have been disproven.

Although few Russians are fond of NATO enlargement, policymakers in Moscow have accepted it. Moreover, no Russian with whom I met in Moscow--from Communist leader Zyuganov, to liberal leader Yavlinsky, to the nationalist retired General Lebed--believed that NATO enlargement constitutes a security threat to Russia.

We have seen Russia ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention, renew efforts to ratify START II, send troops under overall U.S. command to implement peace in Bosnia, and work smoothly with NATO as an organization in the new Russia-NATO Permanent Joint Council.

But ultimately, Russia must understand that it has no veto over NATO actions, nor over the right of former Soviet satellites to freely choose their defense arrangements. I believe their actions demonstrate that they have come to terms--however grudgingly--with this fact.

My fourth thesis is a caution. The consequences of a failure to embrace the Poles, Hungarians, and Czechs as new allies would be a disaster.

This century has taught us that when Central Europeans are divorced from Western institutions of common defense, they are vulnerable to pressure and control by the great powers around them, and susceptible to insidious suspicions of their neighbors' intentions. This forces them to nationalize their defense policies, creating tension and instability

Here, I would like to quote from Dr. Henry Kissinger's testimony to the Foreign Relations Committee on this very point. Dr. Kissinger's testimony to the Foreign Relations Committee on this very point was very, very enlightening, I thought.

Kissinger warned: Basing European and Atlantic security on a no man's land between Germany and Russia runs counter to all historical experience, especially that of the interwar period. It would bring about two categories of frontiers in Europe, those that are potentially threatened but not guaranteed, and those that are guaranteed but not threatened. If America were to act to defend the Oder [between Germany and Poland] but not the Vistula [in Poland], 200 miles to the east, the credibility of all the existing

NATO guarantees would be gravely weakened.

Madam President, I will close with a fifth and final thesis, and it is a moral one.

For 40 years, the United States loudly proclaimed its solidarity with the captive nations of Central and Eastern Europe who were under the heel of communist oppressors. Now that most of them have cast off their shackles, it is our responsibility, in my view, to live up to our pledges to readmit them into the West through NATO and the European Union as they qualify.

Just as NATO enlargements embraced Turkey, Greece, and West Germany several years before the European Union's precursors were yet in existence, so we should not hesitate to accept Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic now, even before their accession to the European Union.

The habits of cooperation created by NATO membership can only help these nations as they prepare for economic integration into Europe and the West.

I thank the Chair for listening and I yield the floor.